

## The Favorite "Bicycle Model" of the New York Studios.



## Is the Bicycle an Aid to Immorality?

The President of the Woman's Rescue League Declares It to Be the Foremost Evil of the Age.

Bicycling is immoral. I have said so, and put myself on record.

Now, how do I know that bicycling is immoral, inasmuch as I do not ride a wheel?

That is one of the questions that has been answered upon me since I had the moral courage to declare my conviction on the subject. I will answer it with absolute frankness.

I know, because I have made a careful study of the matter. Not from prejudice do I speak, but from data obtained by years of inquiry and painstaking observation.

A word to begin with about bad women who ride wheels. Surely, the fact that they do so is no argument against the exercise for those who are respectable. One might as well assert that reputable women ought not to eat and drink because disreputable women pursue those habits. The ground I assume is wholly different.

I will give you a point as an illustration:

In June, 1894, a municipal edict ordered the prodigal women out of Boston. There were at that time in the city about 15,000. All of them were commanded to vacate within twenty-four hours, and the ukase was mercilessly enforced. Few of them had saved any money, and the clothes of many were owned by Hebrew peddlers, who literally tore them from their backs when they were leaving the town. The Protestant churches did not stretch out a helping hand to save them. The Roman Catholic churches did nothing to assist them. They were unfriended by God or man. It was at that time that I opened a refuge for them in Boston, where large numbers of them sought shelter.

It was then that I had my first practical opportunity for considering the evil of their ways from the inside—not from the outside, mind you, as it is studied by theorists. I came to know the unfortunates, and they did not hesitate to confide in me. I saw them driven hither and thither, here and there, and everywhere, scattering infection broadcast through the population.

Many of them told me that they had been taking lessons on the bicycle. I asked of them: "Where are your friends So-and-So and So-and-So?" and the reply was apt to be: "Oh, they have gone on a bicycle tour." This answer signified everything. They were scattering evil on the highways and byways. Stylishly dressed and mounted on wheels, they were much more dangerous than when massed together in the purlieus of the modern Athens.

Only on the wheel their disreputable characters were provided with a deceptive disguise.

I have means of obtaining reliable data on this subject, which are not at the command of the theorists. My mission takes me right among wicked women of all grades, and I know all about them. They have taken up the bicycle not only as a means of enjoyment, but for utilitarian purposes. To-day they prowl a-wheel and in the broad light of day, from the large cities they ride out into the suburban towns, anywhere, everywhere. Acquaintances are so readily made, thanks to the good-fellowship of the bicycle. In truth, that which constitutes the chief danger, is the disguise of these immoral wheelwomen; it enables them to appear in a light of false attractiveness.

I can easily imagine that at this paragraph the gentle wheeler will raise her eyebrows and say that I have not proved my point. Granted; but as yet I have only begun. I have much more to say, and I shall be compelled to speak with even greater frankness for this is no matter to which

beating about the bush is appropriate.

To begin with, good women often become bad women through the influence of their own sex. The bad girl induces the good girl to participate in her amusements. These amusements bring her into contact with young men. Thus one bad girl, one good girl, and two young men of not very stable morals are thrown together. The influence is too much for the good girl, and she succumbs to it. Having once turned into a bad girl, she becomes a corrupting agent among other good girls; for misery likes company. The bad man can reform after he has sown his wild oats, but the bad girl, never; so woman is woman's worst enemy.

The bicycle is the greatest aid to this immorality that has ever been discovered. It makes acquaintance easy. The bad young man and the bad young woman go out together a-wheel. The bad girl gets acquainted incidentally with a good girl, who perhaps has been inclined hitherto to be lively, though in a harmless way. Another young man naturally is required to make a party carter, and the bad youth introduces a friend of his own. The situation becomes dangerous at once for the good girl, unless she is possessed of exceptional virtue. Meanwhile, mind you, she is miles from home and unprotected because, forsooth! she rides a bicycle, and there is a theory to the effect that a young woman owns herself when on a wheel and requires no chaperon or other protector.

You have heard of the bicycle flirt? She is a new kind of new woman, who insists on doing about as she pleases. Apparently, she regards the bicycle as the expression of her emancipation from ordinary feminine restraints. She would be highly insulted if her virtue were impugned; yet it is dubious, to say the least—at all events, from my point of view. She does things on the road which would not be considered respectable on the street. I know many such girls. One of them is employed as a typewriter in a business house, at a salary of \$7 a week. She has several admirers, who ride wheels, and is envied by other young women employed in the same business establishment. They think they could have a good time likewise, if they had wheels, and they are saving up to buy them.

The bicycle code of etiquette is wholly different from the ordinary code. A virtuous young woman thinks nothing of falling into conversation with a strange young man a-wheel, whereas the same girl would think herself insulted if she were addressed with equal familiarity by the same young man on the street or in a street car. There is surely something wrong about this. Improperly in a street car becomes propriety on a bicycle. The character of the vehicle makes all the difference. But this is by no means all, unfortunately. The fact cannot be ignored that temptations to misconduct are greatly enhanced under circumstances where young people of opposite sexes are thrown together in pairs, in sequestered places and by themselves. Some people may be disposed to deny it, but the truth remains that unrestricted intercourse of this sort is dangerous. Any mother who permits her daughter to indulge in it is putting a premium on the girl's destruction.

I have spoken of the bicycle as a utilitarian implement of immorality. This branch of the subject merits more extended comment. Perhaps you know that there is a class of evil-minded men abroad who go about seeking what they may devour. Morally speaking, they are at the lowest depth attainable by human beings. They, too, seek the aid of the bicycle as a means to their infamous ends. One of these creatures and an impure woman go a-wheeling

together. There is nothing about their appearance to indicate to the casual observer that they are disreputable people. The most exquisitely dressed women who ride bicycles are the bad ones, and they and their escorts always have money to spend.

The man and his woman accomplice are out a-hunting. They are skilled and experienced hunters, and the quarry they are after is human flesh and blood. Though the sport has many variations that is always the object. To entrap a good, though "flirty," girl into their company is easy on the road. She suspects nothing, of course. Naturally, it would not occur to her to imagine that these two new acquaintances are engaged in a criminal conspiracy, the purpose of which is her ruin. They are in dead earnest, and they work together so artfully that the victim is soon apt to find herself ensnared in a net. The game is complete when a harmless young man responds to the woman's lure and makes the party four.

While trying to entrap the harmless young man, the vile woman lends every possible aid to her male partner also. The good girl is lucky if she escapes. If she fails, she becomes the victim of those who have entrapped her.

Facilis descensus Avernus! The rest is natural sequence. By this time she is reckless and hopeless, oftentimes in despair. After a short time she is riding harder and harder down hill—still on the wheel. She is still a bicycle girl, and before long she will introduce innocent young women friends of hers on the road to others, after the manner of her own initiation to the impure things of the world.

Perhaps you think that this is all mere romance. I tell you that every word of it is simple fact. My information on the subject I get chiefly from these women themselves; they tell me these things. Several of them have told me that, thanks to the bicycle, they earn much money out of this awful traffic in human souls.

Thus far I have spoken only of the moral aspect of the bicycle and its perilous and pernicious influence on purity. From the physical point of view I consider it almost equally objectionable. For women. For men it is bad enough. During the last eighteen months I have kept careful record of eighty-six cases of appendicitis operated on by surgeons in half a dozen of the principal cities. All of the patients, without exception were bicycle riders. You know, of course, that the theory that this trouble is caused by a seed or other foreign body getting into the appendix vermiciformis is practically exploded. Not long ago I knew a strong and healthy young woman who made her living by typewriting. Having ridden a bicycle for a few weeks, she complained that her back hurt her. She was operated on finally, and the surgeon said that the bicycle was the cause of the trouble. It was six months before she was well.

My views as to the unhealthfulness of the bicycle have been pooh-poohed by many persons who talk more easily than they think. Perhaps it will interest them to learn that the National Medical Association, representing the physicians of the United States, at a recent meeting in New York, adopted a resolution declaring the bicycle to be injurious to women. The fact is, if the bicycle is spreading disease

among women, I know, from information given me by doctors, of many surgical operations for abscesses and other troubles engendered by the bicycle. The saddle is a fruitful source of injury. I am not putting the case too strongly when I say that bicycle riding is ruining the health of tens of thousands of women in this country, and thereby involving the physical welfare of generations yet unborn.

In order that they may appear as "trim" as possible, women who ride bicycles dress in a way that is anything but hygienic. The corsets are drawn tight, to display the V figure, leaving insufficient space for the active breathing required by the exercise. The costume must be of heavy material in order to hang well. A girl of my acquaintance has a bicycle gown that weighs over ten pounds. But the saddle is the worst. I have never seen one that was fit for a woman to sit upon. The jarring incidental to riding over country roads I believe to be frightfully injurious, and my opinion is shared by many prominent physicians in this country. The muscular movements involved in riding the pedals are of a sort that are harmful to women. Like movements are required in working the sewing machine, which is notoriously unhealthful.

Of late we are confronted with the curious spectacle of clergymen indorsing the bicycle and preaching sermons in praise of the wheel. Do you want to know how that comes about? I will tell you. The bicycle agent gives a wheel to the clergyman and offers him a commission on all wheels sold through him to members of his congregation. No wonder he becomes interested! I personally know of eight or ten cases where such arrangements have been consummated. One pastor of a flock, exceptionally conscientious, asked me what my judgment was as to the propriety of his accepting an offer of the kind, which would add \$500 or \$600 a year to his income. God save us, I say, from such preachers! Quack doctors are bad enough, but the quack cycling parson is beyond enduring.

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## A BOMB FOR BICYCLISTS.

It Can Be Thrown at Barking Curs and Is Guaranteed to Abate the Nuisance.

If, when peddling along the Boulevard, you hear an explosion and observe sections of a dog floating through the air, you will know the latest invention for the protection of bicyclists, the bicycle bomb, has come to town.

This new device is the invention of a German, and is effective in the extreme. The antipathy which dogs have for bicycles is extraordinary. But the machines appear to have some magnetic attraction for the canine race, and this being the case, one can look about to discover an antidote.

The newly-invented bomb explodes with a deafening report when thrown at a cur. It is a neat and effective solution of the difficulty, although in a crowded thoroughfare it is calculated to more than realize the expectations of the inventor.

## And Now "Trilby" Is a Bicycle Girl. Miss May C. Dunbar Is Queen of Them All, and Does Nothing All Day but Pose on a Wheel.

And now it is the Bicycle Model.

The wheel has become a fixture in most of the studios of the big illustrators in New York, and the bicycle model, who has arisen as a sign of the times, mounts it and poses.

She poses for nothing else in the world but just a bicycle girl.

And she is kept busy all day long, for the bike and the biking girl dominate art nowadays, as they do everything else. And every illustrator must have a bicycle and a bicycle model at his elbow all the time.

But not every one can be a bicycle model. It requires peculiar and particular characteristics which not every one possesses. Nature, however, seems to have been particularly lavish in the necessary qualifications given to the queen of bicycle models in New York, Miss May C. Dunbar. There is not a famous studio in the city where the "laughing model" (she is also the queen of bicycle models) is not in demand, and she has appeared as a pattern for all the bicycle models that are following in her path.

It was at the home of her mother, in the Kenwood, in West Fifty-seventh street, that Miss Dunbar was seen the other day by a reporter for the Sunday Journal. In the cozy flat, hemmed in on all sides by many treasures of art and interest, gifts of well-known artists, Miss Dunbar would scarcely be recognized as the power on the wheel.

To be sure, by far the greater part of her life is spent in the studios, but there is enough time left for her to devote to music and singing, and to the reading of classics, which she studies closely. For the bicycle model is a student and a musician, as many can attest who have heard her delicate mezzo-soprano voice in the choir of the Holy Innocents' Church.

The moment one catches sight of this beautiful bicycle model one understands why she has earned the sobriquet of the "laughing model." Her profile is decidedly Greek, her eyes a deep hazel, her teeth firm, even, and white as snow; her mouth a picture of grace in itself. A pretty face, it is framed with a mass of Titian hair, but its details are almost swallowed up in the sunny smile which lights it up and makes it radiant.

In the presence of the charming model, so bright, so vivacious and so intellectual, one almost hesitates to ask her how she became the bicycle model, and is surprised when she doesn't have the slightest objection to telling.

"Before I became the bicycle model," said she, "the painters used me only for my hair, or neck, or shoulders. For this I was used by Carroll Beckwith at his studio in the Sherwood; by Amelia Kussner, the miniature painter, who has gone across to paint Duchess Consuelo; by Robert Reid in his Carnegie studio, and a host of others. Mr. Chase, at the Shinnecock, his Summer studio, also posed me for my hands, and then my feet were needed by John La Farge and Thomas Ducey, who also has his studio in the Carnegie building. St. Gaudens used me both for hands and feet, and so did Will Low."

The bicycle model is too modest to say that more heads have been drawn using her own as a suggestion than the head of any other model in New York studios, but all of the artists mentioned testify to that. "I also," she continued, "posed for the illustrators. I was called 'Gibson's laughing girl.' That, of course, was before I became the bicycle model. I invariably wore an Empire gown then. Oh, that was very different from the bicycle costume that I wear now. Besides Mr. Gibson, I posed for the other illustrators, Du Bois Knight, in the Alpine, and W. H. Hyde, in his Washington square studio."

Getting down to the real question of posing on the bicycle, naturally the first query was whether the "laughing model" is fitted by nature for the place she holds. It sounded like a desperate question to ask, but the bicycle model didn't mind it as long as it was in the interest of art.

"Certainly," she answered, when the question was asked. "I am 5 feet 5½ inches in height, weigh 135 pounds, measure 36½ inches bust, 22 inches waist, hips 40 inches, 6½ glove. The length of my hands is 8 inches, about the hand 7½ inches, length of foot 9½ inches, instep 8 inches, and I wear a 5 A shoe. There you have it all."

"When bicycling became such a craze," went on Miss Dunbar, "the artists naturally began to consider its connection with art. It was Gibson who conceived the idea of the bicycle model. One day he asked me if I had a divided skirt. That set me to thinking. Before I called at his studio the next week I had been to a bicycle academy, taken the necessary first lessons and bought the divided skirt, and the remainder of the costume. It was a jaunty suit, and I must say it looked well. Gibson

was delighted and began a picture at once. But he had a terrible time with the bicycle. It wouldn't stand, and I had some awkward falls.

"Then Du Bois Knight began his work with me as the bicycle model. He conceived the idea of making the bicycle immovable so I could maintain the proper pose. Five nails were driven into the studio floor and from as many different directions ropes which led from them to the bicycle held the machine upright, with two boards in addition to make the support even more sure. That made it easy for me. All the artists fix their wheels in the same way now, so that I can pose on them days at a time without the fear of a fall.

"But bicycle posing is very much more difficult than other work. The perfect position must be maintained until the artist has finished his work. Sometimes, when the work is done, my limbs are so numb that I fall in dismounting from the wheel."

"When asked to describe the poses she took in detail, the bicycle model answered, 'They are so varied I never could do that. Sometimes I rest inactive by the machine, again I hold lightly to the handlebars; sometimes I rest both elbows on the saddle as though in reverie; sometimes I am seated on the wheel in correct riding or coasting position. And then, too, there are times when I must pose as the naughty girl with one foot thrown over the handlebars, and a cigarette between my lips.' Artists must have all the conditions as nearly correct as possible, so sometimes I am placed near a window, where they may get the effect of the wind blowing through my sleeves."

"I have to laugh now when I think of the most amusing pose I ever took. It was with Gibson. He wanted a fat old dabbler, but he couldn't find a man with the proper jolly smile. So my smile went in on the round shapeless fisherman's body. Then several times I posed as a ballet girl, in full war paint at that."

"How about bloomers?" the bicycle model was asked. "Of course, you are a strong advocate for them?" For the time the smile flitted from the face in the "laughing model" was no longer true to her title.

"Bloomers! never!" said she positively. "I have always refused to pose in them; I always shall. You see, my ideas of the new woman are, perhaps, peculiar. I spend too much of my time among men of brains to imagine they like a masculine woman. Bloomers are masculine, ungainly, and, worse than all, they are ungraceful. The first bicycle picture for which I posed for Gibson was used in Harper's Magazine, and from there was copied into the French magazines. I wore the proper costume then, and I wear it yet. It is a strictly tailor-made dress, a perfect hanging black satin skirt, a tight-fitting jaunty waist, with perfect shoes and gloves in keeping. Sometimes a blazer is added, with a hat of various styles."

Outside of the studios Miss Dunbar is an expert wheelwoman. "I have to be," said she, "in order to be graceful and natural as well in the studios. Certain muscles have to be developed in the limbs, wrists, neck and fingers, so that poses may be maintained without undue exertion."